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HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY,
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THE SINGING LEAVES

THE SINGING LEAVES

A BOOK OF SONGS AND SPELLS

BY JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages.'

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY
MDCCCCIII

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Thanks are due to the editors of Harper's Monthly, Scribner's Magazine, and other periodicals, for their courteous permission to reprint many of the following poems.

DEDICATION.

Whosoever cares to look
  In my little Book,
If he care to look again,
  Let him so; and then,
Should there be a very few
  Glad to say Amen
To old wonders ever new,
— Why, it is for You.

SONGS AND SPELLS.

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SONGS AND SPELLS.

THE HOUSE AND THE ROAD.

The little Road says Go,
The little House says Stay:
And O, it 's bonny here at home,
But I must go away.

The little Road, like me,
Would seek and turn and know;
And forth I must, to learn the things
The little Road would show!

And go I must, my dears,
And journey while I may,
Though heart be sore for the little House
That had no word but Stay.

Maybe, no other way
Your child could ever know
Why a little House would have you stay,
When a little Road says, Go.

CHARM : TO BE SAID IN THE SUN.

I reach my arms up, to the sky,
And golden vine on vine
Of sunlight showered wild and high,
Around my brows I twine.

I wreathe, I wind it everywhere,
The burning radiancy
Of brightness that no eye may dare,
To be the strength of me.

Come, redness of the crystalline,
Come green, come hither blue
And violet — all alive within,
For I have need of you.

Come honey-hue and flush of gold,
And through the pallor run,
With pulse on pulse of manifold
New largess of the Sun!

O steep the silence till it sing!
O glories from the height,
Come down, where I am garlanding
With light, a child of light!

BEFORE MEAT.

Hunger of the world,
When we ask a grace,
Be remembered here with us,
By the vacant place.

Thirst, with nought to drink,
Sorrow more than mine,
May God someday make you laugh,
With water turned to wine.

SAD TRUTH.

Truth I tell with heavy heart,
To another one,
Give me sweetness for your smart,
When sad time is done.

Then may I be clear again,
Love without disguise;
Since I have to bear, till then,
Dark of hostile eyes.

Bitter shall be sweet some day.
Ah, but that is far away!
I must bind my heart and say:
Bitter now, but sweet some day.

Beautiful, that did come true,
Beautiful, so it was you!
If forgiveness be for us
That we ever doubted thus,
Then forgive us radiantly,
All our doubts that are to be.
Now that we lay hold of you,
Nearer than we hoped or knew,
Dearer than we looked to find,
Beautiful, forgive the blind.

THE BIRD IN THE HAND.

Yesterday has flown away
  Far beyond the sun.
And of morrows, who can say,
  Till another one?

Only Now is all my own,
  And my heart knows how:
O wild wings for a sky unknown,
  Mine, mine — now!

Early in the morning,
  Early in the dew,
Singing from the mountains
  Where the dreams withdrew,
  Lingered one I knew.

'Soul, art thou so shining?
  What is there to tell?
Whither hast thou journeyed?'
  And the answer fell,
  'Early to the well.

'Early, early, early,
  To the farthest light;
Drinking, singing, bathing
  In the cool, the might,
  Whence I have my sight.

'There I found my sandals
Gladdened with a wing;
And my fair apparel
Woven out of Spring.
Therefore do I sing.'

And the golden voices
Warming with the sun,
Dimmed the silver voices,
Fading, one by one.
And the dream was done.

You who saw through my disguise
  Though I came so poor,
Let me bless your true two eyes
  And your open door.
Yes, I am a wonder-child;
  Hark and tell it not. —
With the journey and the cold
  I had half forgot.

Take the charmèd seeds I lay
  In your open hand:
Some would cast them all away,
  You will understand.
Trust the bud to come to flower,
  Trust the flower for fruit.
Listen in the winter-time
  For a cricket lute.

Here are blessings all from me
— Though they look like tears —
For your blessed eyes that see
And your heart that hears.
I am higher than I seem,
Fair as I would be:
O, I bless your heart that hears,
And your eyes that see!

They were ragged gifts I showed,
But you took the sense
Of the bird-nest from the road,
And the lucky pence.
And for all the charms I leave
Every time I pass,
Simple folk will only see
Cobwebs on the grass!

ROAD-SONG.

I.

At home the waters in the grass
Went singing happy words;
But here, they flicker through my hands
As silent as the birds.

I see a Rose. But once they grew
All thronging, thronging, — wild,
And white, and red, before I came
To be a human child.

II.

While I am resting by the road
So dully here apart,
Far-off my Angel laughs, maybe,
Where God shines round her heart.

O, she is laughing, as I think,
Because they cannot know
The parching wonder of the noon
With all our ways below.

They cannot know. But now and then,
They may let fall a song
Blown like a feather down to me,
Because the road is long.

All down the years the fragrance came,
The mingled fragrance, with a flame,
Of Cedars breathing in the sun,
The Cedar-trees of Lebanon.

O thirst of song in bitter air,
And hope, wing-hurt from iron care,
What balm of myrrh and honey, won
From far-off trees of Lebanon!

Not from these eyelids yet, have I
Ever beheld that early sky.
Why do they call me through the sun?—
Even the trees of Lebanon?

ALMS.

I met Poor Sorrow on the way
  As I came down the years;
I gave him everything I had
  And looked at him through tears.

'But Sorrow, give me here again
  Some little sign to show;
For I have given all I own;
  Yet have I far to go.'

Then Sorrow charmed my eyes for me
  And hallowed them thus far:
'Look deep enough in every dark,
  And you shall see the star.'

When I come back to sorrow,
The place seems very old.
Full well I know the lodging,
The meagreness, the cold;
And everything is told.

The common daily portion,
No ampler and no less;
And sorry worn the cup is
And full of humbleness:
A soul can say but, 'Yes.'

The earthen wares are many,
But never are they new.
The one-time guest departed
The same gray service knew.
There is no change for you.

A lie, it may be black or white ;
I care not for the lie :
My grief is for the tortured breath
Of Truth that cannot die.

And cruelty, what that may be,
What creature understands ?
But O, the glazing eyes of Love,
Stabbed through the open hands !

My neighbor's grief is dark to me.
I gaze and dread, without;
And marvel how he lives to bear
The blackness, and the doubt.

And yet, by all lost ways of grief
That I have had to plod,
I know how small a rift lets through
A little gleam of God.

TO SAD-HEART.

I have a word for you,
For you, Sad-Heart,
And pray you keep it till the dawn come true,
And sorrow part.

I never bid you doff
A single care:
But ever till to-morrow, O, put off—
Put off Despair!

Heart said, 'If I had wings,
Such wings as hath the lark,
Even as that freedom sings
Beyond the dark,
I too, if I could fly
From chains that weigh and cling
Ah, but then I could sing,—
Could I!

'O dayspring of desire!
Mid-ocean of delight
Before the dawn of fire
On dawn of sight!
My joy, could it undo
All that despair has done,
I could find out the Sun,
—I too.'

But ah, how vain to long
For glory of the lark,
Who hast more need of song
Down in thy dark;
Where chains may always irk,
And every day's rebuff
Leave thee scarce breath enough,
To work!

Nay, never to assuage
Our need, is joy begun,
But follows some poor wage
Full hardly won.
Never vain wish shall bring
The music from the dumb.
Needs must — ere song will come —
We sing!

To him who hath, late, soon,
To him shall it be given.
Make to thyself some boon,
Some little heaven :
Some feigning, through that mirk,
The blue of upper skies ;
And sing — with blindfold eyes —
At work !

HERE'S APRIL.

Wearied one,
Rest a little in the sun.
Here is April come behind you
With a blessing on your head:
Rains unshed,
And her loving hands that blind you
While she queries, 'Who am I?'
Of the darkened eye.
O, I heard the winter pass!
Came a sigh from waking grass
That should wake a daffodilly.
April, and up-rising now, — and every kind
of lily!

THE COMING.

Low in the west, the early star
Is hazed with fires of Spring.
Low in the east, the golden moon
Comes slowly westering.

The last-year leaves, they breathe and stir
With hope beyond their ken.
O golden fear! — that men must hear
All hearts wake up again.

'O Heart of all things, Heart's Desire come
true,
That nothing may undo!
How long have I been stricken dim with fear,
Hungry and cold and lost, till I should hear
You, — you.

'Now fold me in, O Beautiful, most dear!
And now that you are here,
Where were you, Dearness, — lost and far
apart?
So far!' — 'Nay, all the time, O little heart,
So near.'

EVER THE SAME.

King Solomon walked a thousand times
  Forth of his garden-close;
And saw there spring no goodlier thing,
  Be sure, than the same little rose.

Under the sun was nothing new,
  Or now, I well suppose.
But what new thing could you find to sing
  More rare than the same little rose?

Nothing is new; save I, save you,
  And every new heart that grows,
On the same Earth met, that nurtures yet
  Breath of the same little rose.

Heigh-ho! The same old road it is,
And weary dull am I,
With the same old road and the same old song
I hum and know not why.

But over yon, the city smoke
Goes after one gray dove,
With a flock of gold and silver wings
Along the sun, above.

And of the miry pools below,
The sparrows make the best;
And windows all, with dazzled eyes,
They stare into the west.

And I, I hum the same old song
Though no one could say why.
Maybe so, my singing knows
Even more than I.

When will you come, you maiden by the window,
Come out and leave your little window, there?
Why will you bind your heart up every morning,
As every morning you bind your hair?
Your vine astir would wake a cloud of swallows;
The sower's forth and every worker follows;
The world goes forth, to earn, to seek, to share!
Why is it, little face behind a window,
You do not dare,
You do not dare?

Then will you come, you maiden by the window,
To hear the heart of twilight in the air?
And will you heed the breathing of the wayside,
And all the wise, wide singing everywhere? —
And you and more than you, and more than neighbor,
— With care and bloom, despair and wrinkled labor,
It folds, it holds them all, till they are fair;
— Fairer than you, my maiden by the window,
And unaware,
— All unaware!

Though the dawn bring grayest thread
That my Fates have spun;
Though I lift not up my head,
Sorrow may not shun
The glory of the Sun.

Yea, and though the gold sands run
Fleet through afternoon,
Shadow, that will speed the Sun,
Brings me yet as soon
The glory of the Moon.

Blessèd Ones, and shining boon
Over all our wars!
Blessed we, by night or noon,
That no anguish mars
The glory of the Stars.

THE LITTLE PAST.

JOURNEY.

I never saw the hills so far
And blue, the way the pictures are;

And flowers, flowers growing thick,
But not a one for me to pick!

The land was running from the train
All blurry through the window-pane;

And then it all looked flat and still,
When up there jumped a little hill!

I saw the windows and the spires,
And sparrows sitting on the wires;

And fences running up and down;
And then we cut straight through a town.

I saw a Valley, like a cup;
And ponds that twinkled, and dried up.

I counted meadows that were burnt;
And there were trees, and then there
were n't!

We crossed the bridges with a roar,
Then hummed the way we went before.

And tunnels made it dark and light
Like open-work of day and night;

Until I saw the chimneys rise,
And lights and lights and lights, like eyes.

And when they took me through the door,
I heard it all begin to roar. —

I thought, as far as I could see,
That everybody wanted me!

SUNSET.

Those islands far away are mine,
Beyond the cloudy strip;
And something beautiful, besides: —
I think it is a ship.

THE BUSY CHILD.

I have so many things to do,
I don't know when I shall be through.

To-day I had to watch the rain
Come sliding down the window-pane.

And I was humming all the time,
Around my head, a kind of rhyme;

And blowing softly on the glass
To see the dimness come and pass.

I made a picture, with my breath
Rubbed out to show the underneath.

I built a city on the floor;
And then I went and was a War.

And I escaped from square to square
That 's greenest on the carpet there,

Until at last I came to Us ;
But it was very dangerous :

Because if I had stepped outside,
I made believe I should have died !

And now I have the boat to mend,
And all our supper to pretend.

I am so busy, every day,
I have n't any time to play.

I wish she would not ask me if I love the Kitten more than her.

Of course I love her. But I love the Kitten too: and It has fur.

COW-BELLS.

O what is there behind the hills,
  That all of the bells must know? —
Over in all the light that fills
  The Valley with that glow?

I followed a bell, and it all came true:
  Some down, and a yellow-bird;
And Cedars — oh! — and specked with blue;
  And everything else I heard:

Only whatever it is, behind
  The bell with the farthest call;
The one I follow and never find,
  — The loveliest one of all.

I let them call it just the Wind
And tell me not to grieve:
But I know all it left behind,
And more than they believe.

I know about the far-off lands
Where people never sleep;
They hide their faces in their hands,
And rock and weep and weep.

And I too little, all alone,
To go and find them yet: —
But oh, I hear! — When I am grown,
I never will forget.

THE MYSTIC.

People say to me,
'A Penny for your thought!'
And I can't remember thinking;
And I should think I ought.
I was n't sleeping, either:
I know that, because
I saw things out of both my eyes.
I wonder where I was.

Now I 'm back, I see them
Sitting all around;
And the noise together
Makes a purring sound.
But I know something more
Than just awhile ago.
I know something more! —
I wonder what I know.

My mother cut it out for me
And started it so I could see;
And then she turned some edges in
And let me take it to begin.
I made it. But I did not know
How very hard it is to sew.
I took a long time for that stitch,
And now it 's there, I don't know which
Is better. But not one is small,
And they are not alike at all.
That side was very hard to fix;
And then the needle always pricks,
But you must hold it and take care,
Because the point is always there.
And knots keep coming, by and by;
And then, no matter how you try,

The thread comes out of its old eye.

. . . . . .

But someway, now I have it done, —
I think it is a pretty one.

My father brought somebody up,
To show us all asleep.
They came as softly up the stairs
As you could creep.

They whispered in the doorway there
And looked at us awhile.
I had my eyes shut up, but I
Could feel him smile.

I shut my eyes up close, and lay
As still as I could keep;
Because I knew he wanted us
To be asleep.

I 'm always glad when Andrew comes.
If only I am there,
He stays awhile and talks to me
As if he did not care.

He took me to some Music once,
When it was all for me:
And O, I had a splendid time!
And he said, so did he.

It lasts, as if the Music still
Went round and round the sky: —
He said he had a good time, too;
And I said, so did I!

EARLY.

I like to lie and wait to see
  My mother braid her hair.
It is as long as it can be,
  And yet she does n't care.
I love my mother's hair.

And then the way her fingers go;
  They look so quick and white, —
In and out, and to and fro,
  And braiding in the light,
And it is always right.

So then she winds it, shiny brown,
Around her head into a crown,
  Just like the day before.
And then she looks and pats it down,
  And looks a minute more;
While I stay here all still and cool.
O, is n't morning beautiful?

THE YOUNG THINGS.

THE SAPLING.

When I was but a sprig of May,
With wonders to command,
Above all else I loved most well
What none could understand;
And dear were things far-off — far-off, but nothing near at hand.

O, now it was the sunset isle
Beyond the weather-vane;
And now it was the chime I heard
From belfry-towers of Spain;
But never yet the little leaf that tapped my window-pane.

Heigh-ho, the wistful things unseen
That reach, as I did then,
To guess, and wear the heart of youth
With eager Why and When!
And never eye takes heed of them, in all the world of men.

I saw the river going,
All silver to the brim,
Along the southern meadows
That were a home to him.

I sang, ‘ O River, bear him
My dream, a silver swan.
’T is only he, all day, all day,
That I do think upon.’

And oh, my foolish heart forgot,
So rapt in heart’s desire,
The years he has been sleeping,
Beneath a far-off spire.

NESTS.

O Sparrow, sparrow, did you ever try
To build a nest high up where no birds are,
And close unto a star,
Where it might cling and hear the wind go by?
For that did I!

And far and far I flew along the quest,
For shelter, and I passed the summer rain,
I saw the daylight wane;
I found among the stars no place of rest,
And built no nest.

Down to the Earth again with baffled wings,
The warm green earth where such as we must stay.
But all the livelong day,

High over heaven my dream nest clings and swings,
And my heart sings,
Sparrow !

Some days the faces in the street
Are clouded all, and dull;
And near or far, not one I see
To call it beautiful.

O heavy, heavy is my heart;
And is the spirit blind?
That I am stricken with a doubt,
Because of human kind.

Until I rest my looks upon
Some cart-horse standing by,
With patient forehead, weary mane,
And unreproachful eye.

And kiss him on the brow I do! —
Because I have a mind
To thank him just that he will be
So beautiful, and kind.

The winds have blown more bitter
Each darkening day of fall;
High over all the house-tops
The stars are far and small.
I wonder, will my fir-tree
Be green in spite of all?

O grief is colder — colder
Than wind from any part;
And tears of grief are bitter tears,
And doubt 's a sorer smart!
But I promised to my fir-tree
To keep the fragrant heart.

'Early-Heart tends no geese like ours;
Every one is a swan,
Fit to sing with a nightingale,
Or say to a goose, Begone!'

'Alack, poor souls,' quoth Early-Heart,
'Then yours be only geese?
Nor only so; but your sheep are sheep;
And mine have a golden fleece!'

Quoth Early-Heart, 'And if mine be swans,
Right true you say, hereby.
So take your little and leave my much;
For the lad in luck am I!'

Waddle and quack, and bleat and baa,
They quacked and they baa'd, 't is true.
But Early-Heart followed a white, white flock,
And the hills were far and blue.

I have no word to tell you
The beauty of her face;
From her, a wedding garment
Would win a grace.

And as the glow of moonrise
Will make the east divine,
Doth Soul, the radiant dweller,
Her face outshine.

I would not now give up one hurt,
In this far light of morning;
Each one a rose, a blood-red rose,
A rose for my adorning.

Yes, and the pallor of old grief,
Too lowly even for scorning,
Is warmed into a breathing rose,
A rose for my adorning.

VANITY, SAITH THE PREACHER.

I love my little gowns;
I love my little shoes,
All standing still below them,
Set quietly by twos.

All day I wear them careless,
But when I put them by
They look so dear and different,
And yet I don't know why.

My oldest one of all, —
Worn out; and then the best;
But that I have not worn enough
To love it, like the rest.

The dimity for Sunday,
The blue one and the wool,
Now that I see them hanging up,
Are somehow beautiful.

Of all the white, with ribbons
Gray-green, if I could choose;
The fichu that helps everything
Be gay; and then, my shoes.

My shoes that skip and saunter,
And one that will untie: —
They look so funny and so young,
I hate to put them by.

I wonder, — if some day . . .
All this will be the Past? —
Poor Hop-the-brook and Dance-with-me,
They cannot always last!

My days are strung in amber
  Till I am sad again:
My days are full of sunlight
  Beyond all sun or rain.

My heart is full of tidings
  From every wind that blows;
And I cannot say, 'Good-day to you,'
  But everybody knows!

FORETHOUGHT.

I did not keep the Rose he brought,
After its day;
Although it lived a longer time
Than other roses may.

I let it go the way of all,
For this one fear:
Because it might persuade my heart
That he was growing dear.

But now my heart is well assured;
And I still sing;
And no one here would ever know
That I miss anything!

Ah lad, if I could only say
  The smiles are not for you!
But since your eyes are turned this way,
  What is there I can do?
It 's one I see beyond, beyond,
  My heart is leaning to.

I know, I know, the whole hour long
  I have been dull and sad,
And answered not the word at all
  I meant to answer, lad;
Because my wits were gone astray
  With all the heart I had.

And now the latest ones are come,
  And he is coming too;
And I would keep the starlight back,
  But oh, it will shine through!
And since you never turn to see,
  You take it all to you.

DANCE–TIME.

It 's I live in a very wise Town,
As all wise people know :
They read, they write, they read all day
As orchard-trees do grow.

Said I, — I was a young thing then,
And a foolish young thing, too, —
' I will not spend my little life thus ;
There 's much I 'd rather do.

' For I would rather look at you
This way, with happy looks,
Than lose the stars from my two eyes
With poring over books.

' I 'd rather far be red and white
For stupid folks to see
Than write nine books for little dull worms
To eat them, leisurely.

'And I would rather have it said
When all my days are through,
"O she was good to see and hear
And say Good-morning to!"

'When learning makes you white and red
And fresh as west-winds blow,
I may spend sun and candle-light
To learn what they all know.

'But O, the wise in this wise Town,
They have no longer prime.
And there are fewer wise men, now,
Than once upon a time!'

The hills far-off were blue, blue,
  The hills at hand were brown;
And all the herd-bells called to me
  As I came by the down.

The briars turned to roses — roses
  Ever we stayed to pull
A white little rose, and a red little rose,
  And a lock of silver wool.

Nobody heeded, — none, none;
  And when True Love came by,
They thought him nought but the shepherd-boy.
  Nobody knew but I!

The trees were feathered like birds, birds;
  Birds were in every tree.
Yet nobody heeded, nobody heard,
  Nobody knew, save we.

And he is fairer than all, — all.
How could a heart go wrong?
For his eyes I knew, and his knew mine,
Like an old, old song.

YES, LOVE IS BLIND.

Truly, Love is blind.
All my wish and will,
That he takes for me:
Sure Love cannot see,
That he thinks so, still!

Truly, Love is blind;
But he hears, instead.
He hath such fine ears,
Far away he hears
Little words unsaid.

Truly, Love is blind;
For the merest touch,
Hover of a breath,
Smiling underneath,
He will take for much.

Blind, and without fear!
Even so, I find
He would have me here
Always, very near.
Truly, Love is blind.

THE MORNING WAS SO BRIGHT.

The morning was so bright to see,
I thought that he would come,
Though he is far away from me
While I bide on at home.

The morning was so wide, so blue;
The tide ran in to greet: —
It could not be, I knew, I knew,
But O, the wind was sweet!

There was a ripple on the pond;
The road had one refrain;
And something called me, just beyond
The turn of every lane.

The trees were trying not to sing;
They beckoned on and on:
The day went by with promising,
And now the day is gone.

The after-glow, it fades away
With my own Star above; —
And all the day, and all the day,
I looked for my true love.

And if they faltered in their speech,
They knew not; for their eyes
Grew like with gazing, each on each,
Like deep of sea and skies.

'But I was happy then,
How happy was I then!'
The sorry saying you may hear
Upon the lips of men.

To know when you are happy,
You would not call it wise;
Yet, for the seeing happiness,
How tears will clear the eyes!

They laugh best who laugh last,
Says Pride that fears a fall.
But O, who will not laugh at first,
May never laugh at all!

OTHERS.

NEAR AND FAR.

Near and far, near and far,
All the lights were keeping
Quiet watch with lamp and star,
While the roads were sleeping.

And I saw, far and near:
Starlight overhead;
While a woman's shadow, here,
Made to-morrow's bread.

Near and far; and I forgot
Stars must needs be small:
Lamp and shadow, knowing not,
Did so fold them all.

Little Kathleen, when I was ill,
Offered the mass for me;
And burned a holy candle, too
As white as wax could be.
Little Kathleen, I think of her, —
It may be once a year, —
When houses sweeten with the fir
And bells ring out good cheer!

Hejà! But it is good to live
And walk brown earth once more;
And good to hear your fingers knock
At some familiar door. —
And O, to see them all again,
To see them, — though they say,
'And did you take a journey, then?
And were you long away?'
O, did you take a journey, then?
And were you long away?

VANTAGE.

The wisest finding that I have
  Is very young, no doubt.
Yet many a man must needs grow old
  Before he finds it out.

How happily it comes about —
  And I was never told! —
That we must all be young awhile,
  Before we can be old.

A SONG OF SOLOMON.

King Solomon was the wisest man
  Of all that have been kings.
He built an House unto the Lord:
  And he sang of creeping things.

Of creeping things, of things that fly,
  Or swim within the seas;
Of the little weed along the wall;
  And of the Cedar-trees.

And happier he, without mistake,
  Than all men since alive.
God's House he built; and he did make
  A thousand songs and five.

COUNSEL TO BEGGARS.

O, came you by the same road too,
The road that called to me?
And fellow-farers, will you learn
What shelter there may be?

There 's daybreak there to fill your heart
Red wine for half the way;
And gold there is of sunset, then,
To last another day.

(And fill your pockets with the same
Altho' your need be small.
Take all the bounty while you may,
To have some wherewithal.)

And if you see the new moon,
I bid you tell the news,
And lend the slender silverness
For other poor to use.

And if your heart be sudden light,
  And yet you know not why,
I counsel you to hold the joy;
  Let pride of woe go by.

And if your feet be wearied out,
  And you would rest therefore,
Seek out some house; but look you leave
  Your sandals at the door.

For you shall find — tho' sad to find
  Where houses be so few —
Your too-much sorrow irks a friend,
  If ever it irkèd you!

Take heart. And if the open air
  No shelter seem to be,
Yet there you shall — and only there —
  Have all that you can see.

Eh, is there nothing doing?
Then give your soul good heed;
And show yourself the miracles
That you would like to read,
As long as you 're in need.

And then suppose I sing myself
— And if you will, give ear, —
The very song I never heard,
But I would like to hear:
And this, man, will be cheer!

THE WALK.

We left the house, for we were sad,
To talk of all the griefs we had;

And little did we talk at first,
Leaving to silence all the worst.

The rain it rained and star was none;
The wet made two lights out of one.

And broken paths of shining yet
Made on before us, through the wet.

The more we walked and still would walk,
The less did seem the need of talk.

The more we walked from light to light,
The wiser grew the troubled night.

The tacit lamps proved something clear
As often as one stayed to hear:

And better ways, and endless clews
Dawned with the lengthening avenues.

Till where the street-ends met the square,
We found a thousand tulips there,

Sleeping as flowers sleep o' nights,
Beneath a thousand city-lights.

And then the Bridge from shore to shore
Solved everything forevermore,

So clearly, you could leave the Why,
Contented, to some by-and-by.

And time, and grief, were worn away
Till there was nothing left, to say.

'I love all the world to-day!'
That is very young.
'So I sing, the while I may.'
All the songs are sung.
'God would never say me nay.'
Heed the foolish tongue!

'There's a singing in the tree,'—
All the songs are sung.
'Nightingales! Oh, could it be?'
Heed the foolish tongue!
'And the new moon smiles at me.'
Ah, the moon is young!

Now they come, and now they stop,
  Now they all go in.
Now the coaches drive away;
  And now it must begin.

All their faces looked the same,
  Every time before.
If I heard it, I should know
  More and more and more.

If I heard it, I would sing,
  When I went away.
I would sing it till I grew
  Beautiful, some day.

O, I hear a whiff of it;
  There 's another one; —
And the coaches driving up,
  After it 's begun!

The fairest thing that men have made,
My lad, it is a Ship,
O, beautiful beyond the white
Wild bird she would outstrip!
So beautiful, so beautiful,
A heart must leap to bless,
And after her the wake of foam
Stay white with happiness.

And fairer than all things beside,
My maid,—a Violin;
Nay, aught that will give out again
The music hid within.
Or pipe or string or hollow shell,
It breaks enchanted sleep,
To win awhile the faëry heart
Of air that none may keep.

But all of you who may not go
To sail upon the sea, —
Who wait upon another's whim
For hope of melody, —
Oh, bless your hunger and your thirst,
And give your spirit wings
To speed beyond a narrow door
The heart that sails and sings!

THE CHILD AND THE ANGEL.

Oh, is it you at evening,
And near enough to speak?
And early in the morning,
Your breath upon my cheek?

And when the city noises
Turn into clouds that sing,
Is it your veil around me,
Of hush, and wondering?

And is it you, at sunset,
Who beckon me apart
Till I am something golden,
With petals in my heart?

Ah, Dearness, somewhere over!
A happy child is this
That with shut eyes uplifted,
Waits for you with a kiss.

READING FOR THE POOR.

Young Pity passed us in the street.
Her eyes were like a brook;
And golden leaf and shadow bird
Darkened and lit her look.

Her hair was like the meadow-marsh
That reaches to the sea;
And on her cheek a wild-rose glowed,
The timely rose for me!

Young Pity never knew the word
She gave to men in need,
All clear and simple, in her face,
For working ones to read.

O hide your eyes, my maiden,
And tell your heart to hush;
For love is very bright to see,
And louder than a thrush.
And all adream you wander
Alone in crowded ways,
Where eyes of all the fools and wise
Do follow, wide agaze!

Yet all in vain, my maiden,
To shadow eyes like these;
They shine behind your fingers
Like starlight through the trees.
So dream and shine among us,
Unwitting of the boon,—
How all the eyes, of fools and wise,
Are grateful to the Moon.

HOLIDAY.

When I am far from joy of this,
  In yon thick world of men,
O, save me — save me, world of blue! —
  That I shall thirst for then.

And when the little strength is spent
  And little hope burns low,
Blow softly on that tortured flame,
  — Fresh air from long ago!

O what a Fool am I! — Again, again,
To give for asking: yet again to trust
The needy love in women and in men,
Until again my faith is turned to dust
By one more thrust.

How you must smile apart who make my hands
Ever to bleed where they were reached to bless;
— Wonder how any wit that understands
Should ever try too near, with gentle stress,
Your sullenness!

Laugh, stare, deny. Because I shall be true, —
The only triumph slain by no surprise:
True, true, to that forlornest truth in you,

The wan, beleaguered thing behind your
eyes,
Starving on lies.

Build by my faith; I am a steadfast tool:
When I am dark, begone into the sun.
I cry, 'Ah Lord, how good to be a Fool:—
A lonely game indeed, but now all done;
—And I have won!'

DRUDGE.

I waited long until the sky
  Should give me of its blue
To weave and wear, and share, and weave
  The very stars into.
The days they went, the years they went,
  And left my hands instead
Another thing for wonderment,
  — The mending, and the bread.

Ah me, and one must set a hand
  To burnish up the task,
And hush and hush the old demand
  A wakeful heart will ask.
But with a star's clear eye on me,
  O, I can hear it said,
'What souls there be, that only see
  The mending, and the bread!'

What were you seeking? For my heart
  Woke at your step and heard;
The farthest wakeful leaf of me,
And the hidden nest of the midmost tree,
  Hushed with its hidden bird.
Ah, but the rune imprisoned me
  Till you should speak one word.

Why did you think the spell that drew
  Fell from the cedar there?
You questioned pine and sister pine,
Lingered near ash and wild-grape vine,
  — Doubted the maidenhair;
Ever you missed these eyes of mine
  Too like the twilight air.

The Sun may call the dew to him,
  The waters call the deer;
But O, my roots bind every limb

To hold me hid, apart and dim
And silent, and so near; —
And every leaf of me abrim —
With that you shall not hear.

The flowers knew her through the frost,
Their own true-lover.
Rose crowding rose, the color crossed;
The silver breath could hover
Near and far, poor lover!

They wondered at her through the pane,
And through December.
And then she went her way again,
— Eyes trying to remember.
Have your day, December!

O had you died upon the field
That was so grim to plough,
The tears had blinded every eye
That sharpens on you now.

For death had been a glorious gift,
With all you had to give,
And kinder than we stay-at-homes;
But ah, you had to live!

'Good-morning to you, then.'
(O stricken heart of her!
Silence, silence, breathe for me
A little breath of myrrh.)

'And so good-by again;
Good-by, if you must go.'
(Go after, little shade of me,
And tell her that I know.)

THE COBBLER.

A little cloud in a golden veil
At setting of the sun:
And I a cobbler working — working;
Work is never done.

A little cloud in a golden veil;
And I am mending shoes,
Never a feathered sandal thing
Such as a cloud may use.

A little cloud in a golden veil,
Along the bright highway:
And but for her, to-morrow were
Another yesterday.

And this will stay, tho' she melt away
After the moon sets sail.
For no man's sky is always gray,
— Cloud in a golden veil.

MIRACLE.

Love came by in bitter need.
Oh, but I was sad!
Love stood by in bitter need,
And I nothing had.

Empty were the hands I held
Silently to Love.
Empty, as my heart of words,
Stared the sky above.

Lo, Love took — and thankfully —
All my wish for true;
Then my hands gave back to me,
Full of kisses too.

OPEN HOUSE.

My home is not so great;
  But open heart I keep.
The sorrows come to me,
  That they may sleep.

The little bread I have
  I share, and gladly pray
To-morrow may give more,
  To give away.

Yes, in the dark sometimes
  The childish fear will haunt:
How long, how long, before
  I die of want?

But all the bread I have,
  I share, and ever say,
To-morrow shall bring more
  To give away.

O SLEEP, SLEEP, SLEEP!

Do not dream of me.
Nay, without mistake,
Even for love's sake
And all heedfully;
Do not dream of me.

All day long am I
Leal to all you ask:
Wish and care and task,
Every need come nigh; —
Still to serve and try.

But with my Good-night,
O unrippled sleep!
What is here, should keep
This bewildered light
From its skyward right?

Let me feel no need;
Not a love that clings.
Let me have my wings;
Love my wings indeed:
Give my wings godspeed!

Do not dream of me.
Waking, I'll be human;—
Call it child or woman.
Sleeping, I would be
Only Something Free.

THE CLOUD.

The islands called me far away,
  The valleys called me home.
The rivers with a silver voice
  Drew on my heart to come.

The paths reached tendrils to my hair
  From every vine and tree.
There was no refuge anywhere
  Until I came to thee.

There is a northern cloud I know,
  Along a mountain crest.
And as she folds her wings of mist,
  So I could make my rest.

There is no chain to bind her so
  Unto that purple height;
And she will shine and wander, slow,
  Slow, with a cloud's delight.

Would she begone? She melts away,
A heavenly joyous thing.
Yet day will find the mountain white,
White-folded with her wing.

As you may see, but half aware
If it be late or soon,
Soft breathing on the day-time air,
The fair forgotten Moon.

And though love cannot bind me, Love,
— Ah no! — yet I could stay
Maybe, with wings forever spread,
— Forever, and a day.

My eyes are blind with dust;
My limbs are dull with pain:
But my body shall up and after me,
Again — again — again.

They hover and wheel above.
Where I creep on, they fly;
And with their call and vaunt of life,
They tempt my soul to die.

And the numbness of my heart,
The length I have to go,
The dimness of my starving sight,
They know, they know, they know!

But the little spark I hold
Shall light me farther on
After the gleam — like a far-off stream,—
Until that, too, is gone.

Mirage — mirage — mirage!
But I say, I will not die
For the hoarse Despairs that wait, that poise,
— And I creep while they do fly.

No wonder they stoop so low;
And no wonder they should scoff
With Ah and Ah! — and beak and claw,
As they let me beat them off.

For there is no path to see.
But after the vanished flag
My soul has gone; and after me,
Body must strive and lag.

Up with you, — follow; come —
Whither my face is set.
They would have us dead: but I have said,
Not yet, — not yet, — not yet!

'Who found for you the waters that soothed
your heart-break first?'
'Oh, who but these, my Sorrow, my Hunger
and my Thirst!'

'Who made your eyes the wiser to hail the
farthest star?'
'Who but my Dark I thanked not,—the Dark
where no lamps are!

'And I come singing, Neighbor, to tell you,
where you grieve.
And though my song bled, bled afresh,—yet
would you not believe.'

O little cripple, with the lovely eyes,
What have we done to thee? —
For all our wisdom, putting out thy gleam,
Crying, 'Thou seest not, it is a dream!'
Against thy cry, 'I see.'

O little cripple with the lovely eyes,
What have we now to show?
With vext perpetual ways past finding out,
Teaching thee well the hundred things of doubt,
Who saidest once, 'I know.'

O little cripple with the lovely eyes,
That music of the Sphere
We only sought to bind for thee secure
Some day, if it were true, for thee too sure
Rejoicing with, 'I hear!'

O little cripple with the lovely eyes,
Flower of the broken stalk,
Have pity on our need, for it is sore, —
Of thee, thee only, — thee to go before;
Rise up, rise up, and walk!

'Look down upon thy grief.' — O heart of mine,
That path alone climbed here!

'Look down upon thy fear.' — O heart of mine,
That cloud-shadow, my fear!

'Look down on thy desire.' — And could it shine,
That sorry fallen ember?

'Ah, in the valley yonder, child of mine,
Wilt thou remember?'

THE DOVES.

The doves fly out, the doves fly in,
  Brighter than cloud above,
From thee to me, and again to thee,
  Out of my heart, O Love.

My heart is troubled and hushed with wings
  From the deep, beneath, above;
And the hovering flight of more white things
  Than Earth hath the gladness of.

After one call they follow, all; —
  Thy call to me, O Love:
Lightning out of the blue, but mine
  In the likeness of the Dove.

O, when I saw your eyes,
So old it was, so new, the hushed surprise:
After a long, long search, it came to be,
Home folded me.

And looking up, I saw
The far, first stars like tapers to my awe,
In the dim hands of hid, benignant Powers,
At search long hours.

And did they hear us call,
That they have found us children after all?
And did you know, O Wonderful and Dear,
That I was here?

ALL HAIL.

O, Blessed of the dark, we meet along an
unknown sky;
And here within the light of you, how beau-
tiful am I!

The other worlds are dim around, beneficent
with night.
But I — I turn my face to you, and have no
other sight.

So poising radiant, strong with joy, in desert
air divine,
One star doth to another call, and we belovèd
shine.

We shine transfigured, shine, to know beyond
all hope made wise,
The echo, echo of All Hail, from new-illu-
mined eyes.

Who know not what your glory is, nor why
my looks are bright,
I lean to you, I call to you, I shine with you,
my light.

THE ANOINTED.

I was a little gleaner
Of all the days would yield,
When wonder overtook me
At work within the field.

The stars they gathered round me,
Holding their torches high.
They cried, ‘ Behold the chosen ! ’
And it was none but I.

They hailed me royal, kindred,
And made me understand
With gifts of light and darkness
They gave into my hand.

And here the wonder holds me
Though voices all are gone,
Here in the brimming silence,
With this to think upon.

The kiss upon my forehead
Forevermore is mine.
The sweetness fills my heart up;
The tears make all things shine.

EPILOGUE.

TO THE EVENING STAR.

Yes, and you come, you come. Soft piercing
through
The luminous fair pallor of the west;
Budded in light and blooming manifest
As that first lily of the field may do;
Unshaken by the winds, that all for you
Have made the pathway ready, loveliest,
You come, you look upon us, shining Guest
Of glories that the world is blind unto!

All hail, from us who work no more, but wait:
From the worn furrows darkened after toil,
And from the Sea; and from all eyes that
are.
Hallow our upward looks, and consecrate
These thankful offered savors of the soil
With the one lovingkindness of a Star.

TO HER BOOK.

I kiss you once for luck,
That you may feel no care.
I kiss you thrice for love
That you must spend and share.
Go now, and wheresoe'er
A heart shall take you in,
It is your very kin:
Make music there.

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